

Iowa Rural Health and Primary Care Advisory Committee
Telehealth Recommendations

The Rural Health and Primary Care Advisory Committee is a Governor appointed advisory body on rural health and primary care issues established in Iowa Code Chapter 135.107. The committee is coordinated by the Iowa Department of Public Health's Bureau of Oral and Health Delivery Systems. The purpose of the committee is to provide insight and feedback on health related issues affecting rural Iowans. In 2016 the committee identified telehealth services as a strategy to ensure access to high quality healthcare to rural Iowans.

Access to health services in Iowa's rural communities is declining. At the same time economic resources are limited and the ability to recruit and retain health care professionals is increasingly challenging. Current economic trends indicate that communities must be innovative and efficient while remaining good stewards of scarce community resources. To ensure high quality and efficient health care services are available in our rural communities, the state must invest in the technological infrastructure that can allow telehealth services to be effectively accessed.

The following recommendations have been developed for consideration as priorities to Iowa's health leaders and policy makers.

- 1) Support initiatives to improve and expand innovative technology and access to broadband Internet services that enable telehealth services within rural communities.
 - Make telehealth capacity a priority in current (mobile and wired) broadband initiatives.
 - Evaluate current broadband services to ensure compatibility with telehealth technology.
 - Support the use of non-health care technologies to improve emergency services in rural areas (For example: leverage GPS and communication technologies in agricultural equipment).
- 2) Identify and leverage public and private funding opportunities at the federal, state, and local level that increase telehealth infrastructure, training, equipment and services.
 - Encourage partnerships with rural stakeholder organizations to identify and promote broadband and telehealth funding opportunities.
 - Promote telehealth capacity as a community engagement opportunity for private and corporate investment.
- 3) Support parity reimbursement for telehealth services.
 - Encourage federal and state agencies to implement policies that support parity reimbursement for current and emerging telehealth services across all payors.
- 4) Create a statewide registry of all licensed telehealth service providers (Behavioral Health, Pharmacy, Primary Care and Specialty Care Providers).
 - Work with State Licensure Boards and accrediting organizations to identify all licensed telehealth service providers in the state.
 - Evaluate and review licensure rules to ensure appropriate, high quality telehealth services are provided within scope of practice.
- 5) Provide education and outreach to Iowans promoting the appropriate use of telehealth services and technology.
 - Develop provider and patient guidelines for responsible telehealth use.